The Symbolism of Time in the Flying Carpet and the Wind Horse: Chaos-Cosmos Transitions in Nakhchivan Folklore

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Abstract. This article examines how two recurring motifs—the flying carpet and the wind horse—encode distinct temporal logics in Nakhchivan/Azerbaijani folklore. Through close readings of tales and beliefs (e.g., "Prince Bendali," the Solomon carpet legend, Koroghlu cycles, Yel Baba verses, "The Forty-Bud Lady"), it shows that the flying carpet suspends profane duration by enabling instantaneous ascent into sacred, cosmic space, whereas the wind horse accelerates and safeguards passage through a liminal interval toward order. This chaos-to-cosmos movement structures plot, regulates the hero's trials, and marks the hosting texts as sacral. The carpet functions primarily as a cosmological device activated by magical word or talisman; the horse acts as a sentient companion whose vigilance, color symbolism, and ritual associations (horseshoe luck, winged-birth lore) guide and protect. Juxtaposing these "cosmic vehicles" clarifies how folklore models time not only as measure but as power that can be collapsed, stretched, or ethically mediated—offering a compact framework for regional analysis and teaching.

Keywords: *sacred time; flying carpet; wind horse; Nakhchivan folklore*

1. INTRODUCTION

Magical transport motifs in Turkic and broader Eurasian storytelling often do more than move heroes across space—they recalibrate narrative time. In Nakhchivan/Azerbaijani folklore, two such motifs—the **flying carpet** and the **wind horse**—govern the shift from chaos to cosmos by either suspending duration (instant ascent) or accelerating, guarded passage through a liminal interval. Read as "cosmic vehicles," these images help explain why the hosting texts feel sacral: they operate within consecrated time/space, reorder plot sequence, and ethically orient the hero's trials (Kujundžić, 2012; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023; Heydarova, 2023; Saleh, 2025).

Problem and aim. While carpets and horses have been catalogued as folkloric means of transport, less attention has been paid to their distinct *temporal* profiles and to how those profiles structure sacred narrative time in regional corpora. This study argues that the flying carpet functions as an atemporal device that collapses profane time into an instant of cosmic entry, whereas the wind horse sustains a

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narrated, hyper-quick interval in which guidance, vigilance, and loyalty protect the hero until order is reached (Kujundžić, 2012; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023).

Key terms (operational).

- *Sacred time:* non-ordinary, consecrated temporality that cancels or condenses duration and authorizes passage into the cosmic realm.

- *Liminal time/space:* the transitional zone where trials occur and identity is tested prior to entry into order.

- *Cosmos:* the realm of order opposed to chaos; the narrative telos of successful passage.

Research questions.

1. How do the flying carpet and wind horse differentially configure sacred, liminal, and profane time in Nakhchivan tales?

2. What narrative functions (bypass vs. escorted traversal; tool vs. ally) correlate with those temporal logics?

3. How do local beliefs and ritual residues (e.g., horseshoe luck, color lore, wind/"Yel" associations) reinforce the motifs' time-bearing roles (Heydarova, 2023; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023)?

Corpus and method. The analysis draws only on examples already indicated in the source text: "Prince Bendali," the speaking-carpet vignette, the Nakhchivan legend of Solomon's carpet, Koroghlu's horseshoe leap, the Yel Baba verse, and "The Forty-Bud Lady." Methodologically, it combines motif analysis with close reading to trace how each image activates sacred time, manages the liminal interval, and resolves into cosmos, with selective comparative framing from studies of transport symbolism and children's-literature semiotics where relevant (Kujundžić, 2012; Fang, 1996; Williams, 1976).

Contribution. By specifying *how time works* in each motif, the article offers a compact framework—collapse vs. protected acceleration—for interpreting regional narratives and for teaching the temporal poetics of Azerbaijani folklore.

2. MATERIALS & SCOPE

Corpus. The analysis is limited to the Nakhchivan/Azerbaijani materials indicated in your text: (i) the *flying carpet* episodes from "Prince Bendali," the speaking-carpet vignette, and the legend of Solomon's carpet; (ii) the *wind horse* complex in Koroghlu tradition (the "horseshoe stone" leap), the Yel Baba verse, and "The Forty-Bud Lady." These are treated as the primary data, supported by regional compilations you already cite (e.g., *Azerbaijani Fairy Tales* 2005; *Azerbaijani Folklore Anthology* 1994;

Nakhchivan Folklore 2011) and interpreted in light of relevant scholarship provided in your reference list (e.g., Kujundžić, 2012; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023; Heydarova, 2023; Williams, 1976; Fang, 1996).

Rationale for selection. The set furnishes parallel, culturally coherent instances of two "cosmic vehicles" within one regional tradition, enabling a controlled comparison of their temporal logics (instantaneous ascent vs. accelerated, protected passage) without importing extraneous corpora (Kujundžić, 2012; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023).

Method. Motif-centered close reading with a focus on *temporal operations*: (1) activation (talisman/word vs. sentient ally), (2) interval management (abolition vs. acceleration), (3) spatial register (air/wind), and (4) obstacle logic (bypass vs. guided traversal). Interpretive moves are grounded in internal textual evidence, with brief comparative cues from transport symbolism and iconographic dictionaries strictly for clarification (Fang, 1996; Williams, 1976; Heydarova, 2023).

Scope & limits. The study does not claim exhaustiveness for Turkic or Slavic traditions; color/omen attributions for horses are noted as locally variable. Bibliographic harmonization (e.g., duplicate entries for Fang, 1996; Kujundžić, 2012) will be resolved at final formatting.

3. KEY TERMS & MINI-FRAMEWORK

Sacred time. A consecrated temporality that suspends or condenses ordinary duration and authorizes passage into the realm of order (*cosmos*). In the corpus, sacred time is accessed by magical activation (word, talisman, ritual object) and is legible in narrative shortcuts that "skip" interval (cf. epic-time discussions in Xudaverdiyeva, 2023; symbolism overviews in Williams, 1976; didactic/iconic functions of images in Fang, 1996).

Liminal time/space. The transitional zone where trials, guidance, and testing occur before entry into order; time is not abolished here but *managed* (accelerated, safeguarded).

Cosmos vs. chaos. *Cosmos* is ordered, ethically validated space-time; *chaos* is undifferentiated or hostile space-time from which the hero departs.

Cosmic vehicles (operational label). Motifs that *carry* the hero by re-timing the plot: the **flying carpet** performs *instantaneous entry* (abolition of interval), while the **wind horse** performs *protected acceleration* across the threshold.

Schema. Chaos → *(instantaneous leap via carpet)* → Cosmos; **or** Chaos → *(accelerated, guarded passage via horse)* → Cosmos.

This minimal framework is sufficient to read the Nakhchivan materials without importing external theory and aligns with transport-motif work (Kujundžić, 2012) and regional semiotics (Heydarova, 2023; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023).

4. FLYING CARPET: INSTANTANEOUS TRANSITION INTO SACRED TIME

Function as transport beyond profane duration. In "Prince Bendali," the carpet "swiftly arrived at the dragon's place," collapsing journey-time into a sacred instant. The narrative does not *describe* travel; it *effects* arrival—evidence of time's abolition at the plot level.

Cosmological activation. The speaking-carpet vignette ("Carpet, tell us a story… and the carpet began to speak") shows that the object's efficacy depends on a performative word/talismanic trigger. Such activation marks entrance into consecrated time/space (Fang, 1996 on word–image addressability; Heydarova, 2023 on encoded meanings in carpets).

Freedom and elevation. The escape "from the land of the divs" stages vertical release from hostile space; the carpet's altitude symbolizes a move into ordered perspective—another sign of sacred time's precedence over ordinary sequence (Williams, 1976 on ascent symbolism).

Interdependence of cosmic instruments. In the Solomon legend, the carpet's stasis after loss of the ring clarifies authorization logic: without the rightful seal, cosmic movement ceases. Time reverts to the transitional zone until authorization returns.

Time takeaway. The flying carpet does not *speed up* time; it *suspends* it. By abolishing interval, it installs the hero directly inside cosmic order, marking the hosting text as sacral through instantaneous re-timing (see also transport clustering in Kujundžić, 2012).

5. WIND HORSE: GUIDED, ACCELERATED PASSAGE THROUGH THE LIMINAL ZONE

5.1 Mythic profile and function.

In the examined corpus, the wind horse concentrates fire/light energy and active agency. It is not a passive vehicle but a sentient ally that warns, counsels, and protects. Local color attributions (white/black = luck, red = war, gray = famine) and variant forms (e.g., the three-legged steed) signal its role as a bearer of fate and a marker of the extraordinary rather than ordinary animal life.

5.2 Wind cult and aerial register.

The horse's affinity with *yel* (wind) positions it within an aerial, cosmological stratum. The Yel Baba verse—"with wings on its sides"—makes explicit what belief often implies: horses are **born winged**, and though the wings are said to be lost at birth or at the fall to earth, their memory persists as supernatural speed and lift. This wind linkage explains the horse's capacity to traverse perilous thresholds without collapsing narrative sequence.

5.3 Case study A: Koroghlu's Horseshoe Stone.

Qırat's bird-like leap over a ravine dramatizes threshold crossing as a **kept interval**: time is not erased but compressed. The deep print left on stone functions like a time-stamp and a covenantal sign—evidence that the passage occurred under sanctioned speed and vigilance.

5.4 Case study B: *The Forty-Bud Lady.*

The bond begins in a dream—already a limen between worlds—where the horse speaks and pledges guidance. Through castle trials, it detects danger, resists seduction by chaotic forces, and escorts the hero to order. The hero's reciprocation (e.g., wiping the horse's sweat with a silk handkerchief) codes the relationship as ethical: protection is sustained by care and loyalty.

5.5 Ritual ecology and omens.

Beyond tale-space, custom sustains the motif's guardian status: horseshoe luck, Nowruz-night omens (a horse chewing cud as favor), placing newborns on a horse's back, votive offerings near equine figures, and attributions of heightened vision and hearing. These practices extend the horse's **liminal guardianship** from narrative to lived ritual.

5.6 Temporal logic—time takeaway.

Unlike the flying carpet's **abolition of interval**, the wind horse preserves narrative time but **accelerates and safeguards** it. Passage through the transitional zone is swift, counseled, and ethically toned; arrival at cosmos occurs *just in time*, not *all at once*. In this way, the wind horse scripts a mode of sacred temporality where speed is inseparable from vigilance, reciprocity, and right relation (cf. Xudaverdiyeva, 2023; Heydarova, 2023; Kujundžić, 2012).

6. COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS

6.1 Overview. Read side by side, the **flying carpet** and the **wind horse** function as complementary "cosmic vehicles" that *re-time* the hero's movement from chaos to cosmos. The carpet's logic is **abolition of interval** (instantaneous entry into sacred space), whereas the horse's logic is **protected acceleration** (fast, guided traversal of a liminal interval). This pairing clarifies not just *where* the hero goes but *how time behaves* while getting there (Kujundžić, 2012; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023; Heydarova, 2023).

6.2 Temporal mechanics.

- **Carpet:** time collapses to a punctual instant—journey-time is narratively skipped; arrival itself testifies to sacred authorization.

- **Horse:** time remains sequential but is compressed and safeguarded; the plot retains trial, counsel, and recognition scenes that ethicize speed.

6.3 Agentivity and ethical economy.

- **Carpet as device.** Activation depends on a performative word or talisman (e.g., Solomon's ring). The ethic lies in rightful authorization: when the seal is lost, motion ceases.

- **Horse as ally.** A sentient companion with counsel and omen-sensitivity (dream pact, warnings, reciprocated care). Speed is inseparable from loyalty and vigilance—an ethical

relation, not merely a function (cf. horse-color/omen complexes in regional lore; Xudaverdiyeva, 2023).

6.4 Spatial register and elementality.

- **Carpet:** vertical lift, sky perspective, and the cosmological "above" mark its domain; carpets themselves encode cosmograms and sacred layouts (Heydarova, 2023).

- **Horse:** aerial affinities via *Yel* (wind) and wing-memory beliefs; Koroghlu's "bird-like" leap inscribes wind/air onto stone, materializing a threshold crossed.

6.5 Obstacle logic.

- **Carpet (bypass).** Obstacles are largely *cancelled* by instant translation; the drama relocates to authorization (who may speak/command?) rather than to overcoming terrain.

- **Horse (negotiation).** Obstacles are *engaged* at speed: detection, evasion, endurance, and moral steadiness in a guided interval.

6.6 Ritual and cultural residues.

Horseshoe luck, Nowruz-night omens, and votive practices extend the horse's protective timing into lived ritual; the carpet's symbolic grammars (ornament as encoded meaning) extend sacred mapping into household and civic space (Fang, 1996; Williams, 1976; Heydarova, 2023).

6.7 Narrative payoffs.

- **Carpet:** produces the feeling of the *miraculous now*—cosmos entered "all at once," with narrative emphasis on consecration and rightful command.

- **Horse:** produces the feeling of *kept time*—cosmos reached "just in time," with emphasis on character, covenant, and tested fidelity.

6.8 Teaching/analytical utility.

This dyad lets readers track *two* sacred timings in one regional corpus: (1) instant consecration; (2) escorted, ethical passage. In classroom or comparative work, the pair models how motifs regulate duration and authorization simultaneously (Kujundžić, 2012; Fang, 1996).

6.9 Compact comparison

Axis	Flying carpet	Wind horse
Temporal operation	**Abolishes interval** (instant entry)	**Compresses interval** (guided, accelerated)

Axis	Flying carpet	Wind horse
Agentivity	Magical **device** (word/talisman)	Sentient **ally** (counsel/loyalty)
Obstacle logic	**Bypass** via translation	**Negotiation** at speed
Spatial register	Vertical, cosmological "above"; cosmogram links	Wind/air affinity; threshold leaps
Ethical focus	Authorization/legitimacy (seal, right to command)	Covenant/reciprocity (care, vigilance)
Narrative feel	Miraculous **now**	Kept **just-in-time**

6.10 Time takeaway. The carpet **suspends** profane time to open sacred space; the horse **safeguards** profane time until it becomes sacred. Together they script a two-mode choreography of salvation—*abolition of interval* and *protection of interval*—within Nakhchivan folklore's chaos→cosmos arc (Xudaverdiyeva, 2023; Heydarova, 2023; Kujundžić, 2012).

7. DISCUSSION: NARRATIVE MECHANICS OF TIME

7.1 Time as authorization. In both motifs, movement into or through sacred space-time is never neutral; it is *authorized*. The flying carpet requires a rightful trigger (performative word/talisman), dramatized in the Solomon episode where the loss of the ring suspends motion—time "switches off" until legitimacy is restored. Read alongside regional reflections on rulership and legitimation, authorization here functions like a cosmological sovereignty that enables time to flow in sacral mode (cf. Mustafayev, 2007).

7.2 Word–image activation. The speaking-carpet vignette illustrates how address ("Carpet, tell us a story…") activates a non-ordinary temporality: the image (carpet) responds to the word. This dovetails with insights on the instructional/performative roles of images in children's narratives (Fang, 1996) and with studies of encoded visual grammars in carpets (Heydarova, 2023). In short, *icon + utterance* is a switch that converts profane duration into sacred passage.

7.3 Device vs. companion: ethics of tempo. The carpet is a **device**—its ethics center on rightful command. The horse is a **companion**—its ethics hinge on covenant (care, loyalty, vigilance). Consequently, the carpet's tempo is an *instantaneous ellipsis* (arrival replaces journey), while the horse's tempo is a *compressed continuum* (journey retained, guarded, and morally toned). This aligns with epic-time analyses of Azerbaijani tales where liminal episodes test character within accelerated yet sequential time (Xudaverdiyeva, 2023).

7.4 Aerial semiotics in a wider field. Both motifs partake of an aerial register (sky/wind). The horse's wind link (*Yel*; Yel Baba verse) and wing-memory beliefs map it to air; the carpet's vertical lift stages ascension. Comparative aerial symbols—such as the kite as an uplifted, guiding sign—suggest a broader nineteenth–twentieth century discourse of elevation and control over perspective (Van Riet, 2012), while cross-cultural symbolics confirm ascent as an index of sacralization (Williams, 1976).

7.5 Chthonic contrast and thresholding. Sacred ascent gains clarity against its opposite: the chthonic/depth sphere. Work on time/space in Azerbaijani fairy tales highlights how underworld or "below" zones structure the need for guided transition (Khudaverdiyeva, n.d.). In this dialectic, the wind horse appears as a threshold specialist (bridging perilous in-betweens), while the carpet functions as a direct "above" operator.

7.6 Plot grammar of duration. Formally, the carpet performs **narrative ellipsis** (journey-time is omitted; arrival is foregrounded). The horse performs **narrative montage** (a rapid sequence of warned/averted obstacles). These distinct grammars explain why the carpet clusters with scenes of authorization and consecration, whereas the horse clusters with counsel, omen-reading, and loyal reciprocity.

7.7 Regional and comparative implications. The coexistence of device and companion within one corpus clarifies transport symbolism catalogued for Slavic and Eurasian traditions (Kujundžić, 2012): rather than a generic "magic ride," traditions differentiate *how time is handled.* The Nakhchivan materials make this differentiation especially legible.

7.8 Pedagogical and multicultural valences. Because both motifs externalize time as a manipulable force, they are effective for teaching temporal poetics and for transmitting values (guidance, loyalty, rightful authority) in children's reading contexts (Ismayilova, 2023). Their recurrence across communities also supports discussions of shared symbolic capital and multicultural bridges in folklore education (Saleh, 2025).

7.9 Limitations and prospects. Color symbolism for horses varies locally; aerial/ascensional readings for carpets intersect with multiple ornamental codes (Heydarova, 2023) and deserve item-level analysis. Future work could map *micro-tempo* (sentence-level pacing) to *macro-tempo* (episode sequencing) and compare additional aerial conveyances (e.g., kites, birds) to test whether "abolition vs. protected acceleration" holds across broader corpora.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the flying carpet and the wind horse encode two distinct temporal logics that guide the hero from chaos to cosmos in Nakhchivan/Azerbaijani folklore. The flying carpet operates by abolishing interval—an instantaneous, authorized entry into sacred space that foregrounds consecration and legitimacy (as in the Solomon episode and speaking-carpet vignette). The wind horse, by contrast, provides protected acceleration—a sentient guide that preserves narrated sequence while compressing it, ethically toning the passage through counsel, vigilance, and reciprocal care (Koroghlu's leap, dream-covenant in *The Forty-Bud Lady*, Yel Baba's winged steed). Placed together, these motifs reveal a two-mode choreography of salvation: one opens sacred time at once; the other keeps time safely until it becomes sacred. This clarification helps explain the sacral feel of the hosting texts, refines motif indexing beyond the generic "magic transport," and supplies a compact teaching framework for temporal poetics in regional folklore. While color/omen assignments and ornamental codes vary locally, the core distinction—instant consecration versus escorted, ethical passage—remains stable

across the examined corpus. Future work can map sentence-level pacing to episode design and test the dyad against adjacent aerial conveyances to gauge its wider comparative reach.

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